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The Secret Surrender by Allen W. Dulles

A true spy story by the former head of the CIA and chief of American espionage in Europe during World War II. He tells for the first time the inside story of his perilous underground intrigue which led to the collapse of the Nazi armies in Italy. The first of two parts.

Plus a full regular issue



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The Secret Surrender

Part I: Opening the Intrigue with Hitler's Generals

By Allen W. Dulles

Since his retirement in 1961 from the Central Intelligence Agency, which he directed for Presidents Eisenhower and Kennedy, Mr. Dulles has spent much of his time writing a personal account of one of the great intelligence feats of World War II. Here, for the first time, he tells how he conducted the hidden and perilous negotiations which led to the collapse of the Nazi armies in North Italy.

Mr. Dulles' long, varied, and unstinting service to the United States began in 1916 and included four years as head of the OSS in Switzerland, the key intelligence post in Europe during the war against Hitler. This narrative excerpt, and a concluding one next month, are taken from his book, "The Secret Surrender," which will be published by Harper & Row next October.

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A few days before the end of World War II in Europe, on the evening of May 2, 1945, Winston Churchill made a surprise appearance in the House of Commons. The atmosphere was charged with expectation. Yet the Prime Minister did not immediately intervene in the debate which was then in progress. Whetting the appetites, as he was wont to call it, he glanced through his notes before asking the Speaker's indulgence to make a brief statement. Then, without flourish or rhetoric, letting the bold facts speak for themselves, he quietly announced the first great German surrender to the Allies of World War II. Close to a million men had capitulated unconditionally in Northern Italy. The war against Nazism and Fascism on that front was over.

Behind this announcement lay a dramatic chain of events. Since the end of February 1945, emissaries and messages had been passing secretly between the OSS mission in Switzerland, of which I was in charge, and German generals in Italy. For two crucial months the commanders of armies locked in battle had maintained secret communications through my office in Bern, seeking the means to end the fighting in Italy, hoping that a Nazi surrender there would bring in its wake a general surrender in Europe.

What prevented our early success was the stubborn and insane policy of one man, Adolf Hitler. Despite the hopeless position of his armies, he would not countenance any surrender anywhere. The generals on both sides, Allied and German,

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had long known the war could have only one military outcome. It was merely a question of time and of how the end could be brought about. Could there be an orderly German surrender, or would we be left with chaos and a vacuum of power in those parts of Europe left by the retreating Nazi armies? From reports reaching us it was clear that when the German military defenses finally crumbled, Hitler hoped to drag all of Europe down with him. The German Army leaders had orders to "scorch the earth," to wreck what was left of the industry and economy of the countries they had occupied, and even of Germany itself.

We learned from German sources, however, that our policy of unconditional surrender constituted a deterrent, or at least an excuse, to German generals who might otherwise have been willing to act against Hitler. Several top generals whom the conspirators in the July 20, 1944, attempt to kill Hitler had approached had been unwilling to take part in the plot and to assume the political responsibility involved because the unconditional surrender policy, as they understood it, meant that Germany would be treated with the same harshness by the Allies whether the surrender came early through steps taken by Germans who dared defy Hitler, or later through the actions of Hitler himself or his henchmen.

In addition to the unconditional-surrender slogan, there were other roadblocks to getting a German surrender. The hopes entertained by the Nazis that they could hold out in an Alpine fortress bedeviled our progress. And so did the myth of the "stab in the back." This idea was originally generated after Ludendorff and other German generals in World War I claimed that they had been lured into an armistice in November 1919 by the promises of Woodrow Wilson and his Fourteen Points. Weakness and even treachery were attributed to some of the German political leaders of that day, who, the myth goes, had undermined the will of the German people to resist and had forced the German generals to surrender even when they were still undefeated on the battlefield. Strangely enough, this myth affected not only the attitude of many Germans. It also influenced the thinking of the Allied political leaders in Washington and London. The war against the Nazis and German militarism, many of them said, must be fought to the bitter end this time. They did not want the Germans ever to be able to deny that Germany had been thoroughly defeated on the field of battle.

Hitler used still another myth, one about new German miracle weapons, to discourage any move toward surrender. Up to the very end he convinced his troops that he had in reserve some kind of new

weapon which would change the whole course of the war. And this claim was not as foolish as it may appear today. After all, we were not the only ones working on the atom bomb, and the V-1 and V-2 weapons were already in production.

The final myth impeding progress toward a surrender was that of coming Allied dissension. Hitler unflaggingly nourished the illusion that the Anglo-American Allies and Russia would quarrel and that he could then make a deal with one or the other of them. This myth grew apace at the time of Franklin Delano Roosevelt's death on April 12, 1945.

"Peace" Begins to Crop Up

Some of the main obstacles to peacemaking had been created by Hitler much earlier. Of these, the Nazi oath of loyalty taken by every soldier and officer in the German Army was no doubt the most potent. The oath read as follows:

I swear before God to give my unconditional obedience to Adolf Hitler, Führer of the Reich and of the German people, Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht, and I pledge my word as a brave soldier to observe this oath always, even at the peril of my life.

The distinctive feature of this oath was that it pledged the military to the person of Adolf Hitler, as leader and commander, and not simply to country and flag. Today, far removed from the scene in time and spirit, we find it difficult to form a notion of the awesome power the Nazi oath had in the minds of the German officers.

Once the July 20th plot had failed, the generals—singly or as a group—were still less prone to try to influence the course of the war, either by direct representation to Hitler or by action taken behind his back. For Hitler's awareness of their treachery had turned him fanatically against the military caste. Even generals who had had no part in the assassination attempt had to fear the slightest appearance of treason.

After the 20th of July, aside from close personal advisers like Bormann and Goebbels, Hitler relied almost solely on the SS for the execution of his policies and for his own protection. The SS was, of course, precisely the faction which the Allies would be least disposed to recognize as spokesmen of a surrender and whose removal and punishment would be one of the prime considerations of Allied policy. Thus the outlook for early peace was exceedingly bleak.

By the end of 1944-45, however, we became aware of certain stirrings to the

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south of us, certain changes in the political weather in North Italy. The word "peace" began to crop up repeatedly. We were suspicious from the start because the dreaded SS rather than the Army most often seemed the interested party in these peace feelers. Still, churchmen frequently appeared as intermediaries or emissaries, and one of the most dramatic reports we got stated that Field Marshal Albert Kesselring, commander of the German armies in Italy, was ready to quit if the Allies would offer acceptable terms. A few weeks after that, we heard from an Austrian agent who had been sent by Ernest Kaltenbrunner himself, the most powerful man in the SS Security Services after Himmler. His message rang a new change and, if it were true, gave some inkling of the conflict within the Nazi leadership. Kaltenbrunner wanted us to know that he and Himmler were anxious to end the war and were contemplating liquidating the warmongers within the Nazi party. They wanted contact with the British and Americans.

By the end of February 1945, we had talked to several churchmen and industrialists whom the SS—not the Army—had sent to us as emissaries. Any connections to the Army had been a result of our own initiative—and were fruitless. Among the SS feelers, it was still impossible to tell whether the men who had allowed their names to be used were acting on their own or on higher authority and, more importantly, whether any of them had anything to deliver. It is no wonder, then, that when still another probe bearing all the familiar earmarks reached us, we were not especially enthusiastic.

I heard about it first on February 28, 1945, at a meeting with Gero v. S. Gaevernitz and Major Max Waibel of Swiss Military Intelligence. Gaevernitz is a naturalized American, German by birth, who had business interests and family holdings in Switzerland and who remained there after the outbreak of war largely because he fore-

himself useful in the anti-Hitler cause. He was deeply motivated by the conviction that Germany had never been so thoroughly permeated by Nazism as the world was inclined to believe, and that there were many people in Germany in high positions both civilian and military who were ready to join any workable undertaking that would get rid of Hitler and the Nazis and put an end to the war. Then in his early forties, Gaevernitz was a tall, handsome man with a great capacity for making friends. Indeed, on innumerable occasions, I enlisted his aid, and we have collaborated both in the writing of the book, *The Secret Surrender*, and in preparing this article. For many months he and I had been working closely with Waibel, and a strong bond both of friendship and of professional trust and understanding had grown up among us. Naturally we shared the desire to know what the Germans were planning. This was almost as vital to the Swiss as it was to the Americans.

That day Waibel had been contacted by an Italian and a Swiss. The Italian, a businessman whose name meant nothing to us at the time, was Baron Luigi Parilli. The Swiss was Professor Max Husmann, who ran a well-known private school not far from Lucerne. One of Baron Parilli's relatives had attended Husmann's school, and this was the



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slender link that had led Parilli to tell Husmann his plan. Husmann, hearing what Parilli had to say, had come to Waibel, whom he had known before, and Waibel had turned to us. It was a matter, Waibel explained, which could not be handled by the Swiss, but only by the Allies. At the same time, he assured us, the Swiss had a very deep and natural interest in any project which would bring an early peace and spare North Italy from destruction.

The Baron and the Professor

What did Parilli want? What was he offering? For the details Waibel suggested we talk directly to the two men. I considered this for a moment and decided it would be premature to entangle myself personally with an unknown emissary who might be acting on his own, or worse, be the agent in a German attempt to penetrate our mission. Gaevernitz was ideally suited for the task. He had been working very closely with me for some time, knew my views and methods, and was eminently capable of forming an accurate opinion as to the genuineness of peace probes of this kind.

Gaevernitz reported to me the next day. At first the two men had struck him as unlikely contacts to the armed forces of Marshal Kesselring and the black-booted SS in Italy. The Italian Baron was a short, slight, bald gentleman with ingratiating manners—as Gaevernitz put it, a bit like the keeper of a small Italian hotel who is trying to persuade you to take your dinner there. Husmann was talkative, given to sweeping generalities, and quite pompous in the delivery of them. During the pauses in Parilli's account the Professor lectured on peace and international understanding, which were as dear to our hearts as to his, but to which the session in progress did not seem to be bringing us any closer. Parilli hedged when pressed for the names of the people he was representing. He kept on the theme of the coming horror of German vengeance in North Italy. He had had an inspiration, he declared, that he had been "chosen" to find the solution, to be the intervening "angel" for North Italy.

At last Parilli began to elaborate on the idea that the SS in Italy were somewhat different than you might expect. It was the SS, not the German Army, that might be capable of some independent thought and action—certain people in the SS, anyway. Who? How did he know? Gaevernitz kept pressing for proof. Finally the Baron mentioned his close relationship with a man in the SS, a certain Guido Zimmer, who until recently had been

chief of counterespionage in the SS intelligence office in Genoa. Zimmer, despite his membership in the SS, was a devout Catholic, an aesthete, and an intellectual. According to Parilli, he was moved by a desire to save the art and religious treasures as well as the industrial and power plants in Northern Italy. The talks between them had reached a point at which Zimmer carefully broached the whole problem to a top SS official whom he knew, Colonel Eugen Dollmann. To Zimmer's great relief Dollmann had listened to him with apparent sympathy, and had said that he would pass Zimmer's views to his chief, General Karl Wolff, commander of all SS units in Italy. Parilli did not know what had happened after that. He and Zimmer, he said, had developed a plan of trying to get to Switzerland, to search out a connection with the Allies. On his own, Parilli had applied to the Italian authorities for an exit permit for "economic reasons." Somewhere in the German SS command the word was given to let Parilli take his trip.

Gaevernitz was not overly impressed by all this. He thanked Parilli for informing him of his contacts and his good intentions and said that a talk with Dollmann or Wolff or preferably Marshal Kesselring might be worthwhile. Beyond that one could not go at the moment.

To our surprise, a few days after these meetings we had an urgent call from Waibel. Parilli had returned. Not only that; with him were Colonel Dollmann and Guido Zimmer. Their presence in Switzerland would be kept secret, but they would have to return to Italy shortly. It was up to us to see what we could extract from them.

Wolff: The Prime Mover

It struck me as a good idea to try out another intermediary on these emissaries, one who so far had had nothing to do with this particular operation. The man I had in mind was Paul Blum, a trusted member of my Bern staff and an excellent judge of people.

On March 3, Paul met in Lugano with Parilli, Dollmann, Zimmer, and Husmann. Dollmann, with his dark look, his long black hair combed back and curling a little over his ears, struck Paul as a slippery customer who knew much more than he was telling. Captain Zimmer, good looking and clean-cut, was obviously in a subordinate position, and hardly opened his mouth. Paul quickly learned that Dollmann would try to persuade General Wolff to let them go to Switzerland to continue the talks if there were any hope of estab-

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lishing contact with the Allies. No claims were made that Dollmann spoke for Kesselring, nor did anyone promise to produce him.

Before the meeting I had decided that it was high time we had concrete evidence of the German emissaries' seriousness and of their authority. I had given Paul a slip of paper on which two names were written: Ferruccio Parri and Antonio Usmiani. Parri was one of the heads of the Italian resistance. Usmiani had been doing military intelligence work for me in North Italy and had rendered gallant services. Both had been caught by the SS police and both were being held in prison. I proposed, therefore, that General Wolff demonstrate the seriousness of his intentions by releasing these two hostages to me in Switzerland. Parri was probably the most important Italian prisoner the SS held.

Had we known at that time the anxiety of the German chieftains in Italy about their military situation, we would have been less surprised than we were at what came next. We knew that many of them were willing to pay a price to achieve a sure line of communications with the Allies but they knew they were risking their lives in giving to us a hostage of Parri's stature. Furthermore, the three representative components of German power in North Italy—the Army, the diplomats, and the SS—had little reason to like or trust one another. And within the ranks of each of these three groups, everyone knew that his closest associates—out of fear or loyalty to Hitler, real or feigned—might betray to the Gestapo the least sign of wavering from Hitler's order to fight to the finish.

Even with the historical records we now have, it is difficult to reconstruct the way the idea of a separate Italian surrender grew, and how the various partners to it gradually approached each other. No doubt something in the atmosphere of Italy nurtured it. The people there were remote from the main European fighting front and from the German heartland. The Church was a mollifying influence. And these factors, combined with the particular type of men who happened to be on the scene, must account for it. One thing at least is certain. The prime mover in the end was SS Obergruppenführer Karl Wolff.

To supervise all SS activities, both police and military, a position existed in most German-dominated areas which was called the Higher SS and Police Leader. Normally, this is what Wolff's title should have been but Himmler wanted him to have standing in the eyes of both Mussolini and Kesselring. Accordingly, a new and unique title was created for him. If the other bosses of SS and police were Higher SS and Police Leaders, then

Wolff would have to be Highest SS and Police Leader. He was responsible directly to Himmler and of course to the Führer. He was sent to Italy as Himmler's personal representative to keep order in an area which, at the time of his arrival in 1943, stretched from north of Naples to the Brenner Pass. He was to be Mussolini's adviser in police matters, and no doubt he was to keep a close eye on Mussolini and his Salò government for Himmler's benefit as well. But Wolff was also to work with Kesselring in coordinating the disposition of his SS forces with those of the Army.

To do all this, Wolff was given still another title: Plenipotentiary General of the Armed Forces for the rear combat areas of Italy. As the Nazi power dwindled, titles grew. This new title meant, of course, that if any question of authority between SS police and military forces should arise in the North Italian area, Wolff could intervene to coordinate matters.

Who was this Karl Wolff on whom Himmler showered favors and in whom he had such trust? The facts about him are briefly these. Before he arrived in Italy in 1943, he had been the chief of Himmler's personal staff and one of the liaison officers between Himmler and Hitler—that is, between the SS top command and Hitler's headquarters. At times, he was also liaison between Himmler and Ribbentrop—i.e., between the SS and the Foreign Office. Thus he was not primarily either a commander of troops or a police official. Rather, he was a kind of diplomat or political adviser to the SS leaders. He had unobtrusively slipped into very high places as a man who could manage other men by dint of his personal qualities.

Shortly before coming to Italy, he had broken one rule of the SS which Himmler could not lightly forgive. He was married and had four children but, early in 1943, he decided to marry another woman. He went to Himmler with his request for a divorce (every marriage and divorce in the upper ranks of the SS required Himmler's approval). Himmler turned him down; his own Chief of Staff could not be allowed to set such an example. Without a word to Himmler, Wolff then went to Hitler and asked for his permission. Hitler gave it. According to many accounts, this incident, which annoyed Himmler, was one of the reasons he packed Wolff off to Italy. A top SS official was needed there and while there were other more experienced SS administrators, Wolff had the rank and the personal qualifications for the job and Hitler apparently still thought highly of him.

Reportedly Wolff had told the Pope in May 1944 that he "was ready to commit his own life to the cause of peace." Few knew he had seen the Pope;

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one of these few was the ubiquitous Dollmann, and it was he who seems to have been Wolff's eyes and ears in sounding out like-minded, potential supporters in a conspiracy for peace.

Hitler's Promises Were Lies

When Dollmann, according to a report he wrote after the war, was in Florence in July of 1944, he received an invitation to visit the commander of the German Air Force in Italy, General Max Ritter von Pohl, at his headquarters outside Florence. To his surprise, Pohl opened up at once with a hard-hitting statement on the absurdity of continuing the war and the hopelessness of convincing Hitler that it had to be stopped. The idea which was really the key to the whole surrender in Italy was clearly formulated by Pohl on this occasion, almost a year before the event. Pohl told Dollmann that an agreement would have to be made with the Western powers without Hitler's knowledge. The Army, with its cast-iron notions of loyalty to the Führer's oath, could not be called on to take any action. The SS was the one organization left in Germany with sufficient authority to carry out negotiations to stop the war, yet Himmler would be an unsuitable and unacceptable spokesman. Therefore—and here Pohl turned to Dollmann with a question—wasn't there an energetic and uncompromised leader in the SS who could approach the Allies? Dollmann brought Wolff and Pohl together that September.

As Wolff told us much later, he had believed in the possibility of a compromise peace until the beginning of 1945. He believed in it because he thought that Hitler was really going to produce the new weapons he had been boasting about. After the failure of the Ardennes offensive (Battle of the Bulge in December 1944 to January 1945), Wolff heard that the Germans had almost no air support. The long-awaited new jets had not materialized. For the first time, he realized that Hitler's promises were lies. In mid-February he talked to Hitler in front of Ribbentrop about the need for Germany to find a way to stop the war. Hitler remained unruffled by the proposal, didn't say no, but didn't actually give Wolff permission to do anything.

At the same time, one other man of highest rank in the German establishment in Italy was thinking about surrender and was perhaps even readier to act than Wolff. This was the German Ambassador, Rudolf Rahn, Hitler's personal emissary to Mussolini. Wolff had no direct contact with Rahn, and had none of Wolff's police powers or mili-

tary titles, he was closer to Kesselring and had known him longer.

After Wolff moved up to quarters on the Lake of Garda in the summer of 1944, he became a neighbor of Rahn's and the two men carefully sounded each other out. Both Rahn and Wolff realized that only Kesselring could bring about an armistice, and that he would have to be won over. Rahn offered to talk to him, since he knew him best.

Early in March, Kesselring dropped in to see Rahn, who was sick in bed at the time. Rahn drew him into a discussion of the hopeless military and political outlook for Germany, and told him bluntly that the final moment had come to save the remnants of the German nation from total destruction. As far as Rahn could see, only Kesselring, the last undefeated German Field Marshal, could do



WIDE WORLD PHOTOS

Field Marshal Albert Kesselring

something effective. He alone could really influence his fellow generals to surrender. Rahn waited. Kesselring didn't bat an eyelash. Outwardly he was a cool and dispassionate man. He quietly referred to his oath as a soldier and added that he thought the Führer would still pull them all through. To this Rahn said, "Field Marshal, this is no time for either of us to resort to propaganda slogans for each other's benefit. If you cannot make a decisive move now, I hope you will be ready

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to the moment we hear that the Führer is dead." Kesselring said nothing. He rose from Rahn's bedside to leave. Just before he went he said in an unmistakably friendly manner, "I hope your political plans succeed."

When Parilli had approached us, of course, we knew nothing of all this and we were astounded when, on the 8th of March—only four days after he had started back to Italy with the report on the Lugano meeting at which I had asked for "hostages"—those hostages were delivered to me. Furthermore, Wolff was hard on their heels. Wolff and Parilli had crossed the border shortly after the two released men, Parri and Osmiani. With Wolff were three German officers, Colonel Dollmann, Captain Zimmer, and his adjutant, Major Wenner. All in civilian clothes, of course.

Wolff had acted with astonishing speed. How did he do it? Did he regard himself as invulnerable? Was his power so great that he had nothing to fear? Was he perhaps foolhardy? How did he cover up his tracks? Or did Himmler know, and had he given his approval, and was there, therefore, nothing to hide?

I then decided that it was worth the gamble to see Wolff myself, in full recognition of the fact that considerable risk was involved. It would probably be the first meeting to discuss peace between a commanding German officer and an Allied official since the war began. If Wolff was trying to trick me, and the news leaked, the consequences could be unpleasant. I could see the headlines it would make: "Envoy of Roosevelt Sees High SS Officer." Wolff would learn nothing, but he could make political capital of the fact that I had talked to him. At least I had an alibi: Through Wolff, I had secured the release of two Italian hostages of importance to the Allies, and I hoped to get valuable intelligence also.

Before our meeting, Husmann handed me some papers which he said General Wolff wanted me to see. They were surprising documents, written in German and with Wolff's official card attached. The covering page, in translation, read as follows:

Karl Wolff

SS Obergruppenführer and General of the Military SS.

Highest SS and Police Leader.

Military Plenipotentiary of the German Armed Forces in Italy.

Commander of Rear Military Area and of the Military Administration.

Information about the above person can be given by:

1. The former Deputy of the Führer, Dr. Goebbels, at present in Canada.

2. The present Pope: Visit in May 1944, re-

lease of Professor Vasella at request of the Pope, who stands by to intercede, if desired, at any time.

3. Father Pankratius Pfeiffer, Superior of the Salvatorian Order in Rome . . .

There followed seven or eight more names of churchmen, Italian aristocrats, and so on, with details of how Wolff had been helpful to them, in most cases by releasing them from prison. On the next page were claims of a different sort. Here Wolff set forth that on his orders several hundred of the most precious paintings of the Uffizi Gallery in Florence had been removed to safety in North Italy when Florence was bombarded, along with various sculptures and the famous coin collection of the King of Italy, which was said to be worth many millions of dollars.

He claimed also, to have been responsible, along with Kesselring, for saving Rome from German bombardment; to have settled without bloodshed the general strike in Turin, Milan, and Genoa, involving some 300,000 workers in 1944; and to have negotiated with the partisans in November of 1944, with the result that an amnesty had been declared and the Italian population of North Italy no longer needed to fear being drafted into Mussolini's armies or into German labor forces. There were attachments in support of the claims made. Wolff wanted to show us what kind of man he was, in case I had the wrong idea about him.

Meeting by the Fireplace

I have always tried to have important meetings around a live fireplace. There is some subtle influence in a wood fire which makes people feel at ease and less inhibited in their conversation; and if you are asked a question to which you are in no hurry to reply, you can stir up the fire and study the patterns the flames make until they help shape your answer.

Shortly before ten o'clock Gaevernitz led Husmann and General Wolff into my library. There were no formal introductions. We nodded and took seats around a fire I had built there. Wolff was a handsome man and well aware of it, Nordic, with graying, slightly receding blond hair, well-built and looking no older than his age, which was about forty-five. He sat rather stiffly and said very little at first. Our conversation was in German. Husmann asked my permission to summarize the discussion he had had with General Wolff during the long train ride from the Swiss-Italian border. I consented and Husmann, in his professorial manner, ran down the list of topics they discussed,

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occasionally turning to Wolff, who nodded his agreement. Wolff had conceded that the war was irrevocably lost for Germany, and that the Western Allies could not be divided. He also had assured Husmann that he was acting without the knowledge of Hitler and Himmler. When Husmann had finished, he left us.

"I control the SS forces in Italy," Wolff told me, "and I am willing to place myself and my entire organization at the disposal of the Allies to terminate hostilities." However, he emphasized that in order to end the war in Italy, it was imperative to win over the commanders of the German Armed Forces in Italy.

For a long time he had been on very good terms with Field Marshal Kesselring, he said. If we could assure Wolff that a secure line of communication reaching the top level of the Allied Command was available through his contact to us, he would do his best to arrange that Kesselring or his deputy come to Switzerland with him to sign a surrender. I assured Wolff that we were in direct contact with Allied Headquarters. He seemed immensely relieved.

Neither at this meeting nor later did Wolff suggest that his action would be contingent upon any promise of immunity for himself. He did say that he did not consider himself a war criminal and was willing to stand on his record. In an hour we had progressed as far as we could go at the moment. Until we knew Kesselring's attitude we could not safely plan our further course.

Late that night I sent a full report on the meeting with Wolff to Washington and Allied Headquarters in Caserta. I had not sought prior approval. This would have put too many people in Washington on the spot. It was better to leave them free to disavow me if they wished. Needless to say I awaited the reaction with impatience.

To Caserta, I had suggested that, if Kesselring or his deputy was prepared to come to Switzerland with Wolff to surrender, it would be well for AFHQ to be ready to send some high-ranking officers to meet them. I made it clear that we could not yet judge how much weight could be placed on Wolff's assurances.

This word of caution did not deter Field Marshal Alexander. A man of action, he answered my message with action, not with comment of approval or disapproval. He radioed that two senior staff officers were coming to Switzerland at once. The OSS offices at Caserta and Bern, under the orders of General William J. Donovan, chief of OSS, were already making preparations to provide a safe haven for the German High Command, communications facilities, and the personnel and para-

phernalia required for a complex operation which must remain absolutely secret and secure. If all went well, within a few days emissaries could be converging on Switzerland who could speak for the Allied commanders of the armies that had been locked in battle with the Germans in Italy since June of 1943.

But on the afternoon of March 11th, Waibel phoned me that Parilli had just crossed the border at Chiasso—alone. I met him for the first time that day. Bundled in a large handsome overcoat with a fur collar (it was bitter cold outside) which made him look twice his size, he said a few words to me in English when we were introduced; he spoke Italian, French, and German with equal speed. He liked to interlard whatever language he happened to be speaking with phrases from another. One, which he threw often in my direction, was, "You are the boss." He had a sense of humor, as well as a tendency to dramatize things a bit.

What he had to tell was dismaying. No sooner had Wolff (after his talk with me on the 8th) crossed into Italy and entered the Italian customs office than a message from Kaltenbrunner was handed to him by an SS official from Milan. Kaltenbrunner wanted Wolff to meet him in Innsbruck. During Wolff's absence Kaltenbrunner had tried to get in touch with him, and had been told that Wolff had gone to Switzerland. The fact that Wolff had failed to inform Berlin of his trip immediately aroused the most hostile suspicions. Late that night Wolff sent a teletype message to Kaltenbrunner begging off because of the pressure of work. He had to assume that Kaltenbrunner might try to arrest him if he left his own territory and went into Austria.

Wolff knew now that he would have to straighten everything out with Himmler soon. What he proposed was that we, the Allies, should turn over to him a German prisoner of high rank, equal in importance to Parri, so that Wolff could say his release of Parri was merely a prisoner exchange. Wolff asked us to locate and deliver to him, if possible, Oberstumbannführer Wuensche, a personal friend and favorite adjutant of Hitler's who had been taken prisoner in France. Hitler's birthday was coming up soon and Wolff could say he had personally and quietly engaged in the Parri release in order to give Hitler a birthday surprise.

What amazed me about this was the impulsiveness it revealed in Wolff. He had released Parri, expecting no doubt that word would somehow leak to Berlin, and he had done nothing at the time to cover himself. Now that he was in trouble, he was suddenly trying to devise a pretext for what he had done. Either he considered himself even more

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powerful than he was, or he thought his stock with Himmler, or possibly Hitler, was so high that he could do no wrong. Or, worst of all, he simply didn't think ahead.

At about this time another unsettling event took place. Kesselring, we learned, had been transferred from Italy and made Supreme Commander of the hard-pressed West Front in Germany. We soon found out that his replacement was to be Colonel General Heinrich von Vietinghoff.

And just at this juncture the two officers whom Field Marshal Alexander was sending to me from Caserta arrived: the American Major General Lyman L. Lemnitzer, then Deputy Chief of Staff to Field Marshal Alexander, and the British Major General Terence S. Airey, Alexander's chief intelligence officer. On March 14 I met and briefed them at the French-Swiss frontier. No finer officers could have been chosen for this particular job. General Lemnitzer had already had experience in secret operations, as he had participated prominently in operation TORCH, the North African landing of 1942. Terence Airey was a highly trained and competent intelligence officer. Naturally, the two men were disappointed to learn of Wolff's problems due to Kesselring's transfer. They had other news for me which filled me with mixed emotions. A report of my March 8th talk with Wolff had, they told me, been sent via the Combined Chiefs of Staff, to Moscow and communicated to the Soviet government through our military representatives there. From the beginning I had felt that one of the risks which lay in my meeting with Wolff was a German maneuver to use it as a wedge between the Russians and ourselves. Now that the Russians had been advised this seemed less of a threat. However, though the danger of a leak had been minimized, what would the Russians do with the information that had been given them? We were all too soon to find out.

Up to the Villas

On March 17 we received a message that General Wolff would arrive at the Swiss border on the morning of the 19th. Thus, everything was set for the meeting of the Allied generals and Wolff with their respective advisers on that day. In agreement with Headquarters, we had decided on Ascona, on Lake Maggiore, as the place for the meeting, in part because Gaevernitz had the use of two villas located there which were well suited for our purposes. One villa was directly on the lake and the other a short distance above it. We were well protected from the point of view of

security and isolation, and it was close to the Italian frontier.* The placid lake, among towering mountains, created an atmosphere of serenity and calm. It was hard to believe that not many miles north of us a war was being waged in those mountains. All our surroundings breathed peace and mirrored beauty. It was no accident that Locarno, only a few miles away, had once been selected for a famous peace conference. For a secret meeting between Allied and German officers, here was the perfect spot.



General Karl Wolff

This time Wolff was leaving Dollmann behind at his headquarters to keep an eye on the situation there. If any messages came from Himmler or Kaltenbrunner relating to the business at hand, Dollmann would forward them on to us.

The Allied generals arrived at the villa on the hill at Ascona during the morning of March 19. Wolff and his party were already in Ascona.

Gaevernitz and I settled down to a long preliminary talk with Wolff so that we could brief Lemnitzer and Airey of all the recent developments.

First of all, I pressed Wolff to tell us all he knew about Vietinghoff. What sort of man was he? How well did he know him? How would he react to our particular enterprise? Vietinghoff, he replied, was an old hand in the Italian campaign. Wolff's rela-

*In fact it was so close that Headquarters had at first objected to Ascona on the ground that the adversary might pull off a coup and kidnap the Allied generals. As this would involve a serious violation of security, Headquarters decided to move the meeting to a more secure location. However, it was determined that there was no danger. Anyway we were well guarded.

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tions with him had been close and friendly. However, Vietinghoff was a stiff and proper aristocrat of Baltic origin, as nonpolitical a German general as one could find. He was not likely to take independent action or to understand the political and ethical implications of Germany's position at the present stage of the war. He would not be easy to win over unless he felt that he had the backing of other senior officers in the Wehrmacht. Furthermore, Wolff—having had no way of foreseeing Vietinghoff's assumption of the Italian command—had never discussed the idea of surrender with him. If he could be brought around to it at all, Wolff feared convincing him would take some time.

Kesselring had now been gone from North Italy for ten days, and Wolff had not been in touch with him and could not risk talking with him over the telephone because the Gestapo would be listening in. Did this mean, I asked, that we would have to dismiss Kesselring entirely from our surrender plans? No, Wolff answered, not entirely. As he saw it, there were three possible alternatives. If there was practically no time available, he, Wolff, could simply act with the forces under his own command. This might not be very effective. Or he could go directly to Vietinghoff and see if he could enlist his aid. The third possibility, which he strongly recommended, was for him to go immediately to Kesselring's new headquarters in Germany and try to get his support. Kesselring, he thought, could bring his influence to bear on Vietinghoff.

In Wolff's mind, the controlling factor was time, and that touched on a most delicate question. The German command, he said, had information which led them to believe that a big Allied offensive in Italy would be staged by the end of March. I could not help wondering whether Wolff was trying to find out the date of the offensive for his own reasons. Though I did not know it, the two generals from Caserta most certainly did. His point was, of course, that once the offensive began, the chance of talking surrender with any success was minimized—at least until the first clashes were over.

When we turned to the alternative of Wolff's, acting alone, he described the mixed and motley forces which the SS had assembled in North Italy: Italians, Russians, Serbs, Croats, Czechs, *et al.* They were widely scattered, armed only with light weapons and a few rather ancient tanks. Besides these units, which totaled just under 200,000 men, Wolff had some 65,000 Germans assigned to him, of whom only about 10,000 were in tactical units; the rest made up supply and transportation companies.

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cause from these troops seemed slight.

One thing was now very clear. In any surrender, General Wolff's principal contribution would have to be primarily as the persuader, the man who would talk the Army generals into realizing the futility of further fighting. The question was, therefore, whether Wolff should try to see Kesselring or should just concentrate on Vietinghoff.

We then asked Wolff about Mussolini's position. Wolff said he was largely under the influence of the women around him—his wife, Donna Rachele, and his mistress, Claretta Petacci, and her relatives. He was, in any case, now of no consequence in the matter of surrender. Kaltenbrunner? Wolff showed signs of disgust. Kaltenbrunner was merely trying to develop his own line through Sweden or Switzerland for peace negotiations. He did not want to encourage or permit any competition. What about the Alpine Redoubt, we asked? "Madness," said Wolff. "It would only bring additional suffering to the German people. Everything possible must be done to prevent such last-ditch resistance."

"Produce Somebody"

That afternoon, after I had introduced Lemnitzer and Airey, giving them pseudonyms as "my military advisers," I called on General Lemnitzer to open the discussions with Wolff. He spoke in English and Gaevernitz acted as interpreter. The situation was unique and solemn. It was the first occasion during the entire war when high-ranking Allied officers and a German general had met on neutral soil to discuss a German surrender and talked peacefully while their respective armies were fighting each other.

Lemnitzer, after an appropriate reference to the purpose of the meeting, said that he thought he had a good picture of the problems which Wolff faced as a result of Kesselring's departure for the West Front. The early defeat of Germany was inevitable, and it was understood that all concerned accepted the fact. It was now up to Wolff, in collaboration with the appropriate military commanders, to produce specific plans to achieve unconditional surrender. Technically it would be necessary to arrange for qualified German military representatives to meet with Allied military representatives. If the Germans could be brought to Switzerland, arrangements would be made to take them from there to Allied Headquarters in Southern Italy. Wolff replied that there should be two representatives, one for the Wehrmacht and one for the SS. He emphasized that once these men reached Switzerland, the Allies

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by Allen W. Dulles

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would protect the secrecy of their passage to and from Allied Forces Headquarters and assure their safe return to Switzerland. The Allies, Lemnitzer went on to say, were interested only in unconditional surrender, and it would be pointless for the Germans to come to Caserta unless they agreed to such terms. Furthermore, he told Wolff that conversations at Allied Headquarters would be limited to methods of military surrender, and would not include political issues.

At the end of the meeting I explained to Wolff that it was going to be impossible to produce Wuensche in exchange

for Parri, as he had suggested some time ago. Wolff took this in good grace but said his position would be considerably easier if we could produce somebody; it needn't be a general officer; a lower one would do, as long as he had a decoration or two. I said I would keep trying. Then, having received our agreement that he contact Kesselring, Wolff departed.

Ten days later, on March 30, Zimmer came over the border and reported that Wolff had seen Kesselring and Kesselring had consented to support Wolff's plan. Further, he had told Wolff to tell this to Vietinghoff. If all went as expected, Wolff would come to Switzerland on Monday, April 2, and would try to bring Vietinghoff, or one of the latter's staff officers, and Ambassador Rahn with him. The three components of German power in Italy would be represented.

On Monday, April 2, no one came but Baron Parilli, accompanied by Waibel and Husmann who had met him at the border. He had been at Wolff's headquarters ever since Friday, and Wolff had sent him to tell us what had been taking place.

Himmler had phoned Wolff early on Easter Sunday morning. He had found out that Wolff had moved his family south of the Brenner into an area which was under his own command. Himmler had said, "This was imprudent of you, and I have taken the liberty of correcting the situation. Your



The three intermediaries: Major Max Waibel, Professor Max Husmann, and Baron Luigi Parilli.

wife and your children are now under my protection." It was a clear threat—the usual SS method. He then added that he was warning Wolff not to leave Italy, i.e., not to go to Switzerland. Wolff was almost too depressed to talk. The best he saw for himself was a funeral at state expense. He had not dared come to see us that day.

We fell on Parilli with our questions. How did Himmler get into the act? Who told him what Wolff was doing? How much does he know? What about Hitler? What about Kesselring and Vietinghoff? What about the surrender?

Then the Baron went back to the beginning. Wolff, traveling by car, had finally reached Kesselring's command post near Bad Nauheim on March 23. The Americans had already crossed the Rhine a bare fifteen kilometers away and their continued advance was about to cut Germany in two. All hell had broken loose. While Kesselring was keeping a handful of field telephones hot with orders to his hard-pressed armies, Wolff was trying to tell him what he had done. He asked Kesselring not only if he would approve the surrender attempt in Italy through Vietinghoff, but if he would join in by surrendering in the West.

This was defending German soil and he was bound to continue

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even if he died himself in the fighting. He said he personally owed everything to the Führer. Moreover, he was sure the well-armed SS divisions behind him would take action against him if he disobeyed Hitler's orders. But he would counsel Vietinghoff to go ahead. "I regret that I myself am not in Italy now," he said.

The phone call from Himmler threatening his family had brought Wolff up sharply against the fact he had been evading ever since he had made his first moves in our direction. He could not charm Himmler and the whole SS over to his side. If he took a false step he could be liquidated and then the whole surrender project would collapse. He had to be most careful.

Certain "Points of Honor"

Although he could not meet with us on Easter Sunday, Wolff did meet with General Vietinghoff, and the two met again on the 5th and 7th of April. Parilli was present at the meeting on the 7th, along with Vietinghoff's (formerly Kesselring's) Chief of Staff, General Hans Roettiger.

Both Vietinghoff and Roettiger were well aware of what Wolff had been doing in Switzerland. And they were in full agreement that the time had come to put a stop to any further useless slaughter. But Vietinghoff did not want to go down in history as a traitor to his country or to the traditions of his family and his caste. He was ready to sign an "unconditional" surrender only if the Allies would accept the "points of honor" he wished to have observed. They were these: the Germans would stand at attention when the Allies arrived to accept the surrender; the Germans would not be interned in England or America; they would be held in Italy only temporarily, and while there they would be allowed to do useful work on reconstructing roads and railways instead of being put behind barbed wire; after the situation had stabilized they would be returned to Germany in possession of their belts and bayonets as evidence that they had made an orderly surrender and had not merely been rounded up as a beaten rabble. Vietinghoff also requested "the maintenance of a modest contingent Army Group C [his command] as a future instrument of order inside Germany." Things were getting rather far away from the Casablanca formula of unconditional surrender—so far that Field Marshal Alexander could not accept the terms. Clearly, we had come up against a serious

roadblock.

The coming days brought the sad news of President Roosevelt's death, and also a report that

Himmler had been after Wolff again. On April 14, Himmler had telephoned from Berlin ordering Wolff to report there at once. After putting Himmler off by claiming that his presence was absolutely necessary in Italy, Wolff sat down and wrote him a letter. Playing on an idea which he had long since abandoned himself but which he knew would appeal to the hallucinations of the top Nazis in Berlin, he declared that he was pursuing important negotiations with the Allies with a view to separating the Anglo-Americans from the Soviets.

At length, he pointed out to Himmler how he, Wolff, had been right on previous occasions when he had advised Himmler, and he begged him to take his advice now. Germany's Western defenses were failing, as Wolff had told Himmler they would. Further fighting in the south would only kill off more Germans to no advantage. Wolff was seeking honorable terms with the Allies. He closed his letter by inviting Himmler to come down and join him in his attempt to make peace. (If Himmler had accepted this invitation, Wolff said he would have arrested him on arrival.) Himmler telephoned Wolff immediately after reading the letter. "I didn't ask for a report," he said. "I want to talk to you personally." Wolff gave in; he decided he would have to talk it out with Himmler and probably Hitler. He left by plane for Berlin on March 16.

I did not learn until some time later that, before he left, Wolff gave Parilli a kind of personal testament addressed to me. These were its contents:

In case I should lose my command . . . and the action with which I have associated myself should not succeed, I request that the German people and the German troops in Italy should not suffer the consequences.

If, after my death, my honor be assailed, I request Mr. Dulles to rehabilitate my name, publicizing my true, humane intentions; to make known that I acted not out of egotism or betrayal, but solely out of the conviction and hope of saving, as far as possible, the German people.

After my death, I ask Mr. Dulles, in the name of the ideas for which I shall have fallen, to try to obtain for the German and Italian troops honorable terms of surrender.

I request Mr. Dulles to protect, after my death, if this is possible, my two families, in order that they not be destroyed.

[Next month Mr. Dulles will conclude his story of the negotiations that led to the last "Jawohl" and the German surrender in Europe.]